

Paris, 4 October 2023

## FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS SURPRISES GALORE!

### Key points:

- Only 8 days to go before the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the Rallye du Maroc, the fifth and final round of 2023, takes place from 12 to 18 October. 68 W2RC-registered vehicles, consisting of 31 FIA and 37 FIM vehicles, are among the 247 vehicles on the start list.
- Nasser Al Attiyah leads the car ranking by a country mile. The reigning world champion almost has a new title in the bag.
- Sébastien Loeb, currently just outside the podium, is back. Guerlain Chicherit will no longer be by his side at Prodrive. The 2022 Rallye du Maroc champion is set to make his debut in a Hilux.
- In T3, Red Bull Off-Road Jr Team USA's triple threat has a firm grip on the overall podium. Mitch Guthrie took over the reins in round 4.
- In the motorbike category, Luciano Benavides leads the RallyGP standings with Toby Price and Adrien Van Beveren hot on his heels. The 2022 Rallye du Maroc champion, Skyler Howes, will make his first appearance on a Honda.
- Romain Dumontier has the edge on Paolo Lucci in Rally2. The Rally3 leader, Ardit Kurtaj, will face a fresh challenge from Massimo Camurri. Laisvydas Kancius leads the quad competition. Manuel Andújar is lining up to defend his Moroccan crown.

### CARS: A NEW BEGINNING FOR CHICHERIT... AND THE END OF A CHAPTER FOR AL ATTIYAH?

In the car category, **Nasser Al Attiyah** (Toyota Gazoo Racing — 189 points) will be the centre of attention on more than one count. First, because the reigning world champion holds a comfortable lead of 51 points over **Yazeed Al Rajhi** (Overdrive Racing — 138 points) and is out of reach of **Juan Cruz Yacopini** (Overdrive Racing — 109 points). And second, because the 2023 W2RC finale could well be his last race behind the wheel of a Hilux. On 21 August, Toyota Gazoo Racing announced that it was extending its relationship with the **Al Attiyah-Baumel** duo—which was due to end after round 4 in Argentina—until the end of the championship, adding that it would be back in action in the 2024 W2RC season and that it would reveal its roster shortly after the Rallye du Maroc. Once the finale is done and dusted, the curtain will be lifted on one of the big mysteries of the 2024 transfer market.

One thing is for sure, **Guerlain Chicherit** has already shaken things up! The 2022 Rallye du Maroc will be making his first official outing in a Hilux from Overdrive Racing after entering the first three rounds of the season behind the wheel of a Hunter from Prodrive. A series of mechanical and physical setbacks in the early season and his no-show in round 4 have relegated **Chicherit** to eighth place overall with 55 points. Now without the Frenchman, Prodrive will be back in full force for the first time since the Dakar, with its BRX factory drivers **Sébastien Loeb** and **Orlando Terranova** (second in the 2022 Rallye du Maroc but watching from the sidelines since he hurt his back in the Dakar). **Loeb**, who slipped below **Yacopini** after skipping round 4, is just outside the podium, a mere 8 points behind the Argentinian (101 points). The two Frenchmen will surely go for broke and aim for victory without any strategic concerns. We are in for a tumultuous finale, both on the track and in the bivouac, where the 2024 season will start to take shape!

**Stéphane Peterhansel** and **Carlos Sainz** are back with Audi in their first W2RC appearance since their withdrawals from the 2023 Dakar. Their teammate **Mattias Ekström** has continued to hone his skills, entering the other three rounds at the wheel of a Can-Am from South Racing. The Swede is seventh overall (59 points), right behind **Martin Prokop** (64 points) and his Ford Raptor Orlen Benzina. **Mathieu Serradori** (Century Racing), seventeenth with 22 points, is also staging a comeback. BAIC ORV's Chinese drivers **Guoyo Zhang** (fourteenth with 31 points) and **Li Yunliang** (twenty-second with 9 points) will put a bow on their rookie season.

### T3/T4: BATTLES FOR 2023 AND TESTS FOR 2024

T3 is definitely the real thriller of the FIA competition. 9 points separate the three men on the provisional podium. In the three-way duel for victory among the Red Bull Off-Road Jr Team USA Americans, **Mitch Guthrie** leads the way with 174 points, 3 points ahead of **Austin Jones** (171 points) and 9 points clear of **Seth Quintero** (165 points), the 2022 Rallye du Maroc champion in the lightweight prototype category. In a surprise turn of events, **Rokas Baciūška** will be having a go at the T3 race after securing the title in T4. The Lithuanian will not be the only one to take the fight to the leading lights of T3, as the Poles **Marek, Michał** and **Eryk Goczał**, the youngest Dakar winner in history, have

also registered for the category with BBR. The Americans will be relieved to know that these four heavyweights of T4 will not be crashing their party, as they are not eligible to score points in a category different from the one that they signed up for. As in T1, the T3 race will feel like a sneak peek into W2RC season 3!

## T5: THE REMATCH

The 2023 Dakar champion, **Janus van Kasteren** (Boss Machinery Team De Rooy), and his runner-up, **Martin Macík** (MM Technology), are lining up with 113 points for the Dutchman to 102 points for the Czech. It is all to play for between Agadir and Merzouga. **Martin Macík**, second in the previous world championship, hopes to set the record straight by clinching the title that slipped through his fingers last year.

## RALLYGP MOTORBIKES: FABULOUS FIVE FOR HONDA

For one reason or another, the three Austrian teams have seldom been at full strength this season. Out of the seven factory riders entered at the start of the season, only Husqvarna's **Luciano Benavides** and KTM's **Toby Price** have started and finished the first four legs of the series. It is not a coincidence that they also hold the top two places in the standings in this same order, with 80 points for the Husqvarna Factory Racing works rider to 71 for the Red Bull KTM Factory Racing biker. The Monster Energy Honda clan has taken advantage of the solid and consistent performances of its four official riders to move to the top of the constructor ranking since round 4. **Adrien Van Beveren** is their highest-placed representative, third overall with 66 points to his name.

Having reached the end of his contract with Husqvarna before round 4, **Skyler Howes**, third in this year's Dakar, did not continue his adventure with the brand that gave him his first chance on a factory motorbike in 2021. Out of action in Argentina in late August, the American signed for HRC on 20 September. The 2022 Rallye du Maroc champion is back to defend his title in red, swelling the ranks of Honda from four to five factory riders! This major surprise will limit KTM to **Price** and **Walkner**, as in the previous round. The 2023 Dakar champion, **Kevin Benavides**, is still recovering from the wrist injury he suffered last summer. Over at GasGas, **Daniel Sanders** is not on the start list either as a result of the broken femur he sustained around the same time. The reigning world champion, **Sam Sunderland**, who has not managed to complete any rounds this season, will be the only one flying the flag for GasGas. **Luciano Benavides**, the runner-up in the 2022 Rallye du Maroc, will likewise be the only Husqvarna factory rider. Honda's numerical advantage in the fight for the constructor title continues to grow, but the race to succeed "**Sundersam**" is still up in the air, with just 14 points separating the top 3 and VBA (fourth in the 2022 Rallye du Maroc) well within striking distance.

**Joaquim Rodrigues** is back after breaking his femur in the Dakar. Together with **Sebastian Bühler** and **Ross Branch**, this means Hero MotoSports will be deploying its full firepower. The Botswanan is fourth overall with 45 points.

In the latest news to hit the press, the Austrian teams appointed a new head on 22 September. **Andreas Hölzl** comes from the enduro and hard enduro world championships, where he used to run the Husqvarna factory teams. "**Andi**" took over the mantle from **Norbert Stadlbauer**, who oversaw the Mattighofen squad's 2022 W2RC victory with **Sam Sunderland** and their wins in the last two editions of the Dakar.

## RALLY2 / RALLY3 / QUADS: "DUDU" EAGER TO WRAP UP THIS SEASON AS "MANU" THINKS OF THE NEXT

In Rally2, the withdrawal of **Paolo Lucci** (BAS World KTM Racing — 66 points) in Argentina played into the hands of **Romain Dumontier** (HT Rally Raid Husqvarna Racing — 79 points), who took over the reins of the category. "**Dudu**" has 13 points to spare over the Italian and 21 over his compatriot **Jean-Loup Lèpan** (Duust Rally). In Rally3, the riders of enduro machines tuned for rally raids have had three legs of the series since the Sonora Rally. The Italian **Massimo Camurri** clinched the opener ahead of the Albanian-born **Ardit Kurtaj**, who claimed his maiden win in the Desafío Ruta 40 in the absence of his arch-rival. The two main contenders will roll up to Agadir with a 20-point margin in favour of **Ardit**.

In the quad category, **Rodolfo Guillioli** (53 points) and **Juraj Varga** (46 points) inched closer to **Laisvydas Kancius** (69 points) after the championship leader skipped the Argentinian round. **Manuel Andújar**, the 2021 Dakar champion whose engine bailed out on him last January, only returned to the W2RC in time for the DR40. "**Manu**" won there and surged to fifth place in the championship. **Kancius** is out of reach of the *Albiceleste*, but the 2022 Rallye du Maroc champion intends to defend his title and lay the groundwork for the 2024 season.

### PROGRAMME:\*

- 9 October: opening of the service park at 2 pm
- 10 and 11 October: private test
- Afternoon of 11 October and 12 October: administrative and technical scrutineering

- 13 October: prologue — Agadir (total: 109 km) / Tony Parker visit to the bivouac / Free concert
- 14 October: stage 1 — Agadir–Zagora (road section: 397 km / special: 324 km / total: 721 km)
- 15 October: stage 2 — Zagora–Zagora (road section: 100 km / special: 288 km / total: 388 km)
- 16 October: stage 3 — Zagora–Zagora (road section: 108 km / special: 336 km / total: 444 km)
- 17 October: stage 4 — Zagora–Merzouga (road section: 75 km / special: 351 km / total: 426 km)
- 18 October: stage 5 — Merzouga–Merzouga (road section: 0 km / special: 152 km / total: 152 km)
- Evening of 18 October: prize award ceremony

Local Time: GMT +1

List of FIM riders authorised to start [HERE](#); FIA crews authorised to start [HERE](#)

Official Rallye du Maroc website [here](#)

Official W2RC website [here](#)

**Press contacts**

**W2RC**

Thida Vuillaume  
[pressedakar@aso.fr](mailto:pressedakar@aso.fr)

**FIM:**

Isabelle Larivière  
[isabelle.lariviere@fim.ch](mailto:isabelle.lariviere@fim.ch)

**FIA**

[press@fia.com](mailto:press@fia.com)